

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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P 101230Z JAN 75

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3074

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0027

EXDIS

NOFORN

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, ET

SUBJECT: USG POLICY IN ETHIOPIA AS IT RELATES TO ERITREA

REF: A. ASMARA 0006; B. USDAO ADDIS DTG 031200Z JAN 75;

C. FBIS TELAVIV DTG 080914Z JAN 75; D. ADDIS ABABA 283

1. SUMMARY: USG IS FACED WITH RE-EVALUATION OF ETHIOPIAN POLICY IN LIGHT OF INCREASED LIKELIHOOD THAT ELF/PLF WILL EFFECT CHANGE IN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ERITREA AND ETHIOPIA. BOTH PMG AND ELF/PLF HAVE EXPRESSED DESIRE FOR USG AID. USG MUST DECIDE WHETHER TO SUPPORT EITHER OR BOTH, OVERTY OR COVERTLY. ANY DECISION SHOULD WEIGH IMPORTANCE OF KAGNEW STATION AGAINST USAID AND MAAG PROGRAMS IN ETHIOPIA. THE RELATION BETWEEN USG INTERESTS AS OPPOSED TO OTHER THIRD-PARTY INTERESTS IN ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA SHOULD ALSO BE CONSIDERED. END SUMMARY.

2. ELF/PLF THROUGH PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND MILITARY ACTION HAS STATED ITS AIM OF ERITREAN INDEPENDENCE. RECENT ACTIONS OF PMG HAVE RESULTED IN GREATLY INCREASED DOMESTIC SUPPORT FOR ELF/PLF WITH A CORRESPONDING SUPPORT FROM ARAB STATES. PMG DELEGATION HAS COME TO ASMARA TO SEEK PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO ERITREAN PROBLEM. ELF/PLF ARE CONSIDERING OFFER AND ATTEMPTING TO DETERMINE ITS CONTENTS. DUE TO PAST DECEIT BY THE AMHARA TRIBE, ERITREANS ARE EXTREMELY SKEPTICAL THAT TALKS WILL LEAD TO A SOLUTION. IF TALKS ARE UNSUCCESSFUL ONE PARTY OR THE OTHER WILL LIKELY INITIATE MILITARY ACTION. ERITREANS BELIEVE THAT PMG IS ONLY TRYING TO BUY
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TIME AND ENHANCE ITS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE WITH EFFORTS AT TALKS.

3. CONGEN HAS RECEIVED WRITTEN AND VERBAL REQUESTS FROM ERITREANS FOR USG AID FOR THE ELF/PLF. THE REQUESTS ARE BOTH SELF-SERVING AND BASED ON THE BELIEF THAT ERITREA SERVES CERTAIN STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE USG. REF B REPORTS REQUESTS FROM MOD TO MAAG FOR MILITARY AID. USG CAN DENY REQUESTS FROM BOTH SIDES, HELP BOTH OVERTLY, HELP ONE OVERTLY AND THE OTHER COVERTLY, OR HELP ONE ONLY.

4. ANY OF THE ABOVE CHOICES WILL HAVE AN EFFECT ON AMERICAN CITIZENS, AND PARTICULARLY USG PERSONNEL, IN ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA. SUPPORT FOR NEITHER RPT NEITHER SIDE COULD EARN US ENMITY AND POSSIBLY REPRISALS FROM BOTH SIDES. HELPING BOTH OVERTLY WOULD BE COSTLY, CONFUSING AND POSSIBLY SELF-DEFEATING. HELPING ONE OVERTLY AND THE OTHER COVERTLY WOULD INVOLVE SAME RISKS AS ABOVE BUT TO A LESSER DEGREE. HELPING ONLY ONE SIDE WOULD MEAN OUR INTERESTS

IN THE OTHER LAND AREA WOULD HAVE TO BE MINIMIZED AND POSSIBLY WITHDRAWN. NOMINATION OF A U.S. AMBASSADOR AND THE OFFER OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT BY GRANT OR SALE WOULD INDICATE USG SUPPORT FOR THE PMG AND EXPOSE USG PERSONNEL IN ERITREA TO REPRISALS FROM THE ELF/PLF. IF THIS OPTION IS THE ONE CHOSEN, THE OFFER/ANNOUNCEMENT OF MILITARY AID SHOULD BE DELAYED UNTIL AN ERITREAN SOLUTION IS FOUND OR UNTIL ALL USG OPERATIONS ARE CLOSED IN ERITREA.

5. IN EITHER OPTION WE CHOOSE, WE WILL BE COMPETING WITH RUSSIAN, CHINESE OR ARAB INTERESTS. THE RUSSIANS AND CHINESE HAVE OFFERED ETHIOPIA VARIOUS DEGREES OF MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID. IF THE USG BACKS ETHIOPIA WE WILL BE COMPETING FOR INFLUENCE THRU MAAG AND AID WITH RUSSIA AND CHINA IN THE CONTEXT OF ETHIOPIAN SOCIALISM. IN SUCH A CONTEXT THE USG WOULD BE TRYING MERELY TO HOLD GROUND RATHER THAN GAIN GROUND. IN ADDITION WE MAY ALIENATE OIL-PRODUCING ARAB STATES WHICH HAVE PLEDGED SOME AID TO ERITREA, AND WHICH WOULD LIKELY SUPPORT AN INDEPENDENT ERITREA BECAUSE OF ITS MOSLEM POPULATION.

6. BASED ON THE ABOVE ASSESSMENT, I MAKE THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. USG SHOULD USE ITS GOOD OFFICES TO ASSIST SETTLEMENT OF
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ERITREAN QUESTION.

B. NO NEW MILITARY AID TO ETHIOPIA PENDING SETTLEMENT OF
ERITREAN QUESTION.

C. IF IT IS IN LONG-RANGE US INTERESTS TO SUPPORT PMG, KAGNEW
STATION AND AMCONGEN SHOULD BE CLOSED TO PREVENT REPRISALS
AGAINST THEIR PERSONNEL.

D. IF ERITREAN SITUATION CONTINUES TO DETERIORATE, NO NEW EMPLOYEES SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY DEPENDENTS, AND THOSE DEPENDENTS AT POST SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO LEAVE.

7. ABOVE MESSAGE DISCUSSED WITH OICNAVCOMMUNIT AND CHIEF, DOD/STONEHOUSE. CHIEF DOD/STONEHOUSE BELIEVES IF ASMARA IS NOT SAFE FOR DEPENDENTS IT IS NOT SAFE FOR HIS EMPLOYEES EITHER. OIC NAVCOMMUNIT CONCURS IN ABOVE RECOMMENDATIONS.
PERRY

NOTE BY OC/T: EXDIS CAPTION ADDED PER S/S-O, MS, ELTZ.

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